



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Alaska Fire Service

**FEDERAL INTERAGENCY
WILDLAND FIREFIGHTER MEDICAL
QUALIFICATION STANDARD
INFORMATION PACKET**

Introduction

The National Fire and Aviation Executive Board authorized an interagency team to address a common perception that the existing physical examination processes for employees who participate in arduous wildland fire fighting duties are not adequate. The team underwent basic firefighter training, gathered information on the existing procedures involved with physical examinations, reviewed relevant studies, interviewed fire managers and firefighters (both in an office setting and on the fire line), and discussed their findings. It was the consensus of the team that the current physical examination process was inadequate for the intended purpose of reasonably assuring a level of employee health necessary so that the employee will not be at unnecessary risk, or put others at risk, in performing arduous duties associated with firefighting. There were questions concerning whether the physician was given enough information to make a medically sound judgment of whether the individual being examined could safely perform the duties required by these positions. There was also the question of what relevant health factors should be assessed and what was the most effective and economic method of assessment.

Under 5 CFR Part 339 Medical Qualifications Determinations, medical standards may be established for functions with duties that are arduous or hazardous in nature. The medical standards described in this section are required because of the arduous and hazardous occupational, functional and environmental requirements involved with wildland fire fighting. The medical standards are provided to aid the examining physician, the designated medical review officer(s), and officials of the involved agencies when determining whether medical conditions may hinder an individual's ability to safely and efficiently perform the requirements of a wildland firefighter without undue risk to themselves or others. They are also intended to ensure consistency and uniformity of the medical evaluation of applicants and incumbents for this role.

The web site with complete information on the Medical Standards Program (MSP) may be found at the http://www.nifc.gov/medical_standards. Additional informational resources may be found in the authority and references & related programs section below.

Authority

- A. 5 CFR 293, Subpart E, Employee Medical File System Records
- B. 5 CFR 339, Medical Qualification Determinations
- C. 29 CFR 1613, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- D. 5 USC 7901, Health Service Program
- E. the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
- F. Privacy Act of 1974
- G. 370 DM 339, Qualifications Requirements (Medical)

References and Related Programs

- A. 29 CFR 1910, Occupational Safety and Health Standards
- B. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- C. DOI Occupational Medicine Handbook

D. Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualifications Standard

Section I - General Information

The following is provided with the understanding that the information available at the web site listed above has been read, and you have a working knowledge of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) & Alaska Fire Service (AFS) organization and operations in Alaska. The Frequently Asked Questions section at the web site has a good list of commonly asked questions.

BLM Alaska was incorporated into the Medical Standards program in 2004, along with the other DOI agencies. In 2006, the United States Forest Services in Alaska come on board as well. In 2010, the existing vendor's contract expired, and was not renewed. The physical exam requirement was discontinued for all firefighters except those Emergency Fire Fighters and Administratively Determined (AD/EFF) over 45 years of age, requiring all others to complete the health questionnaire annually. In January of 2013, the MSP came out with a new policy and directives, which required all arduous wildland firefighters to have a physical exam (except AD/EFF under 45 years of age).

The management of the Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standard (FIWFMQS) program within Alaska BLM is broken out into two groups. The first group addresses permanent, career seasonal, and temporary/incidental (i.e. smokejumpers, FSS, hotshot crewmembers, etc.) employees. The second group addresses the AFS village Emergency Fire Fighter (AD/EFF) workforce.

BLM firefighters within Alaska, but outside of AFS, fall within the first group. These individuals shall work with their local Field/District Office Fire Management Officer (FMO) to obtain an exam.

The previous program consisted of four exam forms; the Baseline, Periodic, Annual and Exit. The exams were further divided by the age of the firefighter. The 2013 program consists of a single exam packet designed to ensure the firefighter meets current standards relevant to arduous wildland firefighting duties.

Medical Examination

A consistent set of medical examination criteria, a medical examination form, and an annual medical history and clearance form were developed to provide uniform tools for agencies to use in the administration of the medical program. This allows for the comprehensive collection of medical data important to the determination of medical fitness for firefighting duties.

The following is a description of the exam:

Required Exam: An obligatory medical history questionnaire and Clearance Exam is required of firefighters in those years when the HSQ is not required.

Completed exams will be sent to the Servicing Human Resource Officer (SHRO), an exam revealing abnormal or suspect medical conditions must be forwarded to the SHRO within five

days for further review and initiation of the mitigation/waiver process. If more information is needed, a Further Evaluation letter will be sent to the firefighter requesting additional supporting information/medical documentation. It is important that the firefighter get this requested information/medical documentation to the SHRO in the allotted timeframe described on the MSP website (http://www.nifc.gov/medical_standards/index.html).

Forms

Medical Examination: The “Federal Interagency Medical History, Examination and Clearance” form is used. The shaded area of the appropriate medical examination form is filled out by the employee prior to, or at the time of, the examination. The examining physician completes the medical information sections, standards review, and clearance sheet during the course of the medical examination. The physician or an allied medical care provider shall make a clearance determination and provide a copy to the firefighter. After receipt of the other test data, the employee forwards the completed medical examination form to SHRO. The employee will need to keep a copy of the clearance determination page, to be presented to the administrator at the time of the Work Capacity Test (WCT).

Section II - Point of Contact

The main focal point for the coordination of this program is the Safety & Occupational Health Office within AFS. The lead for this program shall be the Safety Manager. He will serve as the central point of contact for managers and supervisors, outside agencies and contractors. He may be required, and has been authorized by the program manager Larry McCray, to handle and review confidential medical information under the Privacy Act of 1974 and OPM/GOVT-10 (the System of Records Notice for federal medical records) and BLM Manual 1400-339 Medical Qualifications Program (Internal), Rel. 1-1690. The information may be in written, computerized, or verbal format; and he may receive or become aware of confidential information through several mechanisms, including written, verbal, or computer-based sources. The information, all records and their contents, will be maintained in a secure and confidential manner by the SHRO at all times, and will be used only for the necessary and legitimate purposes for which the information was gathered.

Section III - Permanent, career seasonal and temporary employees

Supervisors, FMO's of regular and temporary (EFF) employees who fall within the requirements and have an arduous rating on their red card have the responsibility to ensure the tri-annual exam for their firefighters is completed. This exam must be completed before the planned work capacity test (WCT) date.

Options regarding where and how employees may complete the physical are outlined in the [AFS Employee Handbook](#), if an employee does not have access to this document they should contact their supervisor.

Roles

Health & Safety Office:

- Will be the main contact for general questions and guidance for AFS supervisors.
- Will be the main contact between AFS and outside agencies (i.e. TCC, other federal agencies, etc.)
- Will be the main contact between BLM Alaska and MSP.
- Will initiate the Purchase Requisition (PR) when there is a need for a Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) with a local clinic..
- Provide written guidelines of the program.
- May serve as Wildland Fire Safety Program Manager (WFSPM), as outlined on the MSP website when necessary.

Supervisor/FMO:

- Maintain MSP web access and familiarity with the program.
- Make exam appointments for employees. The exam date should be made far enough in advance of the WTC to ensure that any changes in an employee's medical condition that might require further information and/or the waiver and accommodation process will be completed in time to take the WCT. This time frame should also be followed when moving an employee into an arduous duty job from a lesser WCT requirement position.
- Ensure that completed exams are logged in the Wildland Firefighter (WLFF) Tracking Tool, or equivalent, for their area.

Personnel Office (SHRO):

- Request and maintains medical exam packets.
- Notifies Department of the Interior Medical Standards Program (DOI MSP) at wlfcsr@blm.gov when WLFF receives a non-clearance determination from a clinic.
- Notifies (WFSPM) if medical condition of WLFF changes. If the WLFF develops a change in medical status (injury or illness) between yearly medical exams that prevents them from performing arduous duty lasting longer than three consecutive weeks, contact the DOI MSP at wlfcsr@blm.gov or call 888-286-2521.

Management Official (MO):

- Makes one of three decision options for the 1st level Risk Mitigation/Waiver, then signs the memo and responds back to the SHRO within 5 days.
- MO makes the final decision in 2nd level DOI MRB process. Completes a decision memo and transmits it to the FMO, WLFF, SHRO, WFSPM, National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) Employee Relations Specialist and DOI MSP within ten days of receipt of the recommendation memo from the appropriate Fire Director.
- The MO reevaluates the WLFF with an existing Risk Mitigation, Waiver, or Waiver with Restrictions when the WLFF's related medical condition changes significantly. The MO makes one of three decision options, then signs the memo and responds back to the SHRO within 5 days
 - Acceptable Risk
 - Acceptable Risk with Conditions, or
 - Unacceptable Risk

- If the MO's decision is Acceptable Risk with Conditions of the existing Risk Mitigation/Waiver, the WLFF has 10 days to review and accept additional conditions as defined by the MO, or the decision moves to Unacceptable and the WLFF starts the Risk Mitigation/Waiver Process from the beginning under the identified time frames.

Fire Fighter:

- Request exam through their supervisor
- Pick up or receive exam form.
- Complete the employees section of the form before exam date/time.
- Attend exam as scheduled.
- Provide follow up information as requested.
- Provide appropriate parties the appropriate information within required timeframe.

Section IV – Temporary/ EFF

All EFF regardless of age are required to complete the Health Screen Questionnaire each year they wish to qualify to take the WCT. A 'No' answer will determine if a given firefighter needs a physical exam.

Roles

Health & Safety Office:

- Will be the main contact for general questions and guidance to AFS supervisors.
- Will be the main contact between AFS and outside agencies (i.e. TCC, other federal agencies, etc.)
- Will be the main contact between BLM Alaska and MSP.
- Will provide the project inspection for contract administration issues.
- Will coordinate with MSP and/or FMO's/Section Heads to ensure that medical examiners are lined up each year.
- May serve as Wildland Fire Safety Program Manager (WFSPM), as outlined on the MSP website when necessary.

Supervisor/FMO:

- Maintain MSP web access and familiarity.
- Coordinate and ensure that each remote village crewmember requiring an exam is visited by a qualified examiner, or is able to have a regional health provider that is under contract, perform an exam.
- Ensure that exam requests are logged in the WLFF Tracking Tool or equivalent.
- Print forms and provide to the fire fighter.
- Ensure all EFF fire fighters are "cleared" before administering the WCT to them.
- Notifies Department of the Interior Medical Standards Program (DOI MSP) at wlfcsr@blm.gov, AFS Safety Manager, and HR when WLFF receives a non-clearance determination from a clinic.

- Notifies (WFSPM) if medical condition of WLFF changes. If the WLFF develops a change in medical status (injury or illness) between yearly medical exams that prevents them from performing arduous duty lasting longer than three consecutive weeks, contact the DOI MSP at wlffcsr@blm.gov or call 888-286-2521.

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Fire Fighter:

- Ensure they possess the current year's exam form, available on the MSP website, or contact their FMO/Supervisor.
- Complete the employees section of the form before exam date/time.
- Attend exam as scheduled and bring exam forms.
- Provide follow up information as requested.
- Ensure HR receives the completed packet.
- Retains a copy of the clearance page to present before taking the WCT.

Resources

- The Medical Standards web site: www.nifc.gov/medical_standards.

This site also has power point presentations on the program overview, waiver/accommodation process, and CHS training. There is a section of sample "Further Medical Evaluation" letters, waiver accommodation process aids, and miscellaneous documents/forms.

- AFS Safety Manager (907) 356-5868